

CRITICAL RATIONALE

'Ours' (2024) is a multi-media installation incorporating a wall-based tapestry and a log book. It explores ideas surrounding the 'public archive' and its accessibility, explicitly examining how these repositories can be activated and understood. The practice-based engagement explores notions of authority, power and ownership of certain narratives within current visual culture. The work constitutes an assemblage of multiple disparate but connected images from the archive that attempt to engage with audiences to activate the 'public archive'.

The archival collections used within the work were sourced from the Public Domain Review, an online journal and not-for-profit project founded in 2011. The journal is dedicated to exploring curious and compelling works from the history of art, literature, and ideas that have fallen into the public domain and sharing them so they can be built upon without restriction (Collee, n.d.).

Throughout the selection process of these archives, I decided not to pick and choose through history and, instead, use an unbiased method to select them. I sorted the photography articles on the site by the most recent and picked the first 25 archival collections; I then catalogued every image from the collections into a spreadsheet to keep a record of the images and their information.

The methodology I followed whilst creating the collage was mainly intuitive; I worked from top to bottom, only seeing around a metre and a half at once. I would surround myself with the photographs and choose whichever image I felt would work best in each scenario.

For printing the photographs for their use in the collage, I varied the sizes of the photographs and printed all of the images in greyscale; both of these changes created a degree of equivalency. The decision allows the viewer to focus entirely on the content of the collage and no other elements. The removal of colour and the differing sizes allows the individual images to work together without overshadowing each other, granting the viewer a more immersive and thought-provoking experience with the collage. The individual works are meant to be considered as one complete archive within the collage; they can be seen as individuals in the book, displayed in their original forms where the viewer can fully appreciate them.

The methodology I utilised while creating the work is similar to Mark Mandell and Larry Saltons's 'Evidence' (1977), whose work follows a similar process of machinic assemblage; they collected photographs from the archives of major American technological and research institutions, pairing these photographs on facing pages to form an obscure narrative that questions the truth value of visual information and documentary evidence (Witt, 2017). Their work discusses the consideration of a single image's complexity when viewed outside its original context; it allows each image to aid in the activation of its surrounding images, similar to the construction of the collage, where the individual works are taken from their original context and placed in a new landscape where their new sequence creates relationships between them as one narrative.

After I had finished the collage, I began making the book, using the spreadsheet where I had recorded every image I had used in the collage alongside their information. I then started my investigation into the public accessibility of the archives I had used in the work; I researched them all and wrote a brief history of each collection to help understand the cultural, historical, and artistic value of the collections.

In the opening pages of my book, I have included a manifesto which provides readers with their first understanding of how the book will work and a brief explanation of how and why I sourced these collections. It lays the groundwork for the unique approach and structure of the book through a set of objectives I have followed throughout the research process to aid me in exploring the public accessibility of these collections.

At the beginning of my research, I wrote a series of parameters that I decided would make the collections publically accessible. These parameters were written

These collections have been sourced from the site publicdomainreview.org

They are the most recent articles released on their site

They were researched, recorded and then printed out for use in the accompanying collage

Every image within this work was used within this collage.

This work aims to research and to provide as much history into each image and collection as possible.

This work aims to explore the public accessibility to these archives outside of the Public Domain Review

This work aims to explore the power structures in place which restrict accessibility to these archives.

This work aims to provide new perspectives to these archives.

This work aims to bring more awareness to these archives.

This work aims to make these archives ours.

Fig. 1: Manifesto

from the perspective of a member of the general public attempting to discover more about the collections to highlight how, although a work may be in the public domain, it can still be generally inaccessible. These forms of exploration are necessary in today's culture as the world progresses into a more online state. They help to emphasise the importance of making cultural and historical resources accessible to everyone, everywhere.

This examination is substantiated by research into The National Archives and their pursuit to digitise their archives fully; in the last few years, the organisation has redoubled its focus on digital platforms and services and is planning to “become a digital archive by design” (PublicTechnology, 2017). With so many historical perceptions being under hold and controlled by institutional narratives and corporations, maintaining connections with the archive is paramount to keeping a hold of the histories behind us as they are essential as we move forward.

This engagement process was influenced by the work of Yinka Shonibare, specifically his ‘The British Library’ (2014). The work is an installation of 6,328 hardback books individually covered in colourful ‘Dutch wax print’ fabric and arranged on rows of shelving (Tate, 2014). On the spines of many of these books are printed the names of notable first- and second-generation immigrants and incoming migrants to Britain who have moved here throughout history, as well as the names of prominent figures who have opposed immigration at various times. The work aims to create public engagement with the topic and to demonstrate notions about history that the general public may not have considered previously.

The evolution of archives from tangible to digital is a pivotal step towards total accessibility. The work of the Public Domain Review is an essential aspect of moving forward towards this, as they aim to help facilitate and create new paths towards public domain archives. My project, ‘Ours’, aligns with this goal by generating public engagement to activate and bring archives to life for contemporary audiences. My work encourages new relationships and narratives; this approach is necessary to ensure that the historical significance and cultural value of the archive is not only preserved but also amplified for future generations.

REFERENCE LIST

Collee, L. (n.d.). *The Public Domain Review*. [online] The Public Domain Review. Available at: <https://publicdomainreview.org>.

PublicTechnology. (2017). *How The National Archives is digitising 1,000 years of history*. [online] Available at: <https://www.publictechnology.net/2017/10/05/science-technology-and-research/how-national-archives-digitising-1000-years-history/#:~:text=The%20work%20to%20digitise%20records> [Accessed 7 May 2024].

Sorrell, H. (n.d.). *About» The British Library*. [online] The British Library. Available at: <https://thebritishlibraryinstallation.com/about/>.

Sultan, L. (n.d.). *Evidence*. [online] Larry Sultan. Available at: <https://www.larrysultan.com/gallery/evidence/>.

Tate (2014). *‘The British Library’, Yinka Shonibare CBE, 2014 | Tate*. [online] Tate. Available at: <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/shonibare-the-british-library-t15250>.

Witt, A. (2017). *Evidence 1977 by Larry Sultan and Mike Mandel*. [online] Tate. Available at: <https://www.tate.org.uk/research/in-focus/evidence-sultan-mandel>.

FIGURE LIST

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PUBLICALLY ACCESSIBLE: works are classified as publically accessible in this work if they meet two of the following criteria:

- if there is more than two links about it on the first Google page
- if one of these links is not a Wikipedia link
- if i can find more than two articles surrounding the work
- if, once searched, the original holder of the work is the first link on the page
- if i can find more than three references about the histories of these works.

Fig. 2: Parameters

Marcie Lewis

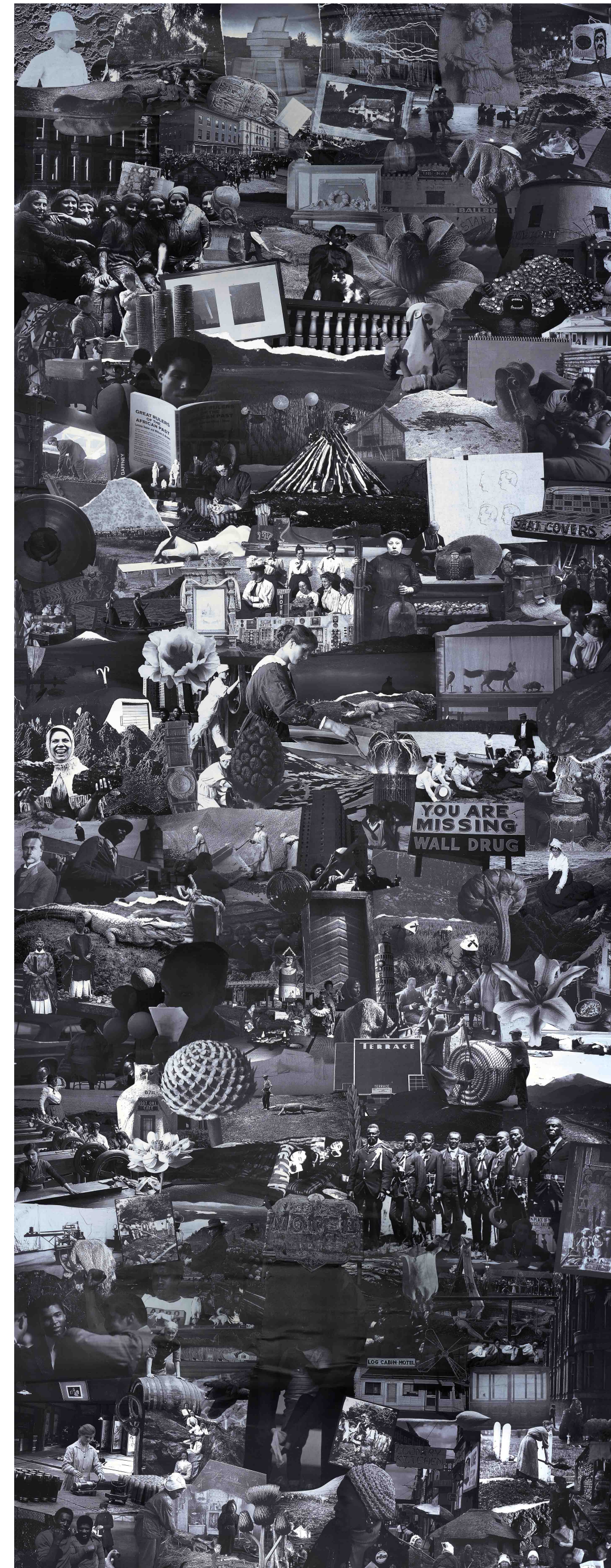


'Ours' (2024) is a multimedia tapestry and book project which explores the control over access to archives within the public domain and the power structures involved therein. The work aims to provide new perspectives on the concept of an archive. It offers context that diverges from the imperial legacy associated with the historical collation of documents, facilitating engagement with a broader audience and contemporary realities.

Highlighted as urgent in the work is the mediation of our historical understanding, personal data, and narratives about our interactions with the world by corporate and institutional narratives. These histories intertwine notions of access, power, and knowledge and necessitate unlearning.

COLLAGE VIDEO:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zBGEg4_6W4





OURS (2024)

13.75cm x 20cm

Handbound Hardback

300 Pages

Edition of Three



BOOK PDF:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/187FHJGEm1rfy7YQmXmC9xrHNBP4Ca86-/view?usp=sharing>

BOOK VIDEO:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1SHyv-PFs-7hORh9QBrEDIuxTwR12JUiw/view?usp=sharing>



Manifesto



Definitions





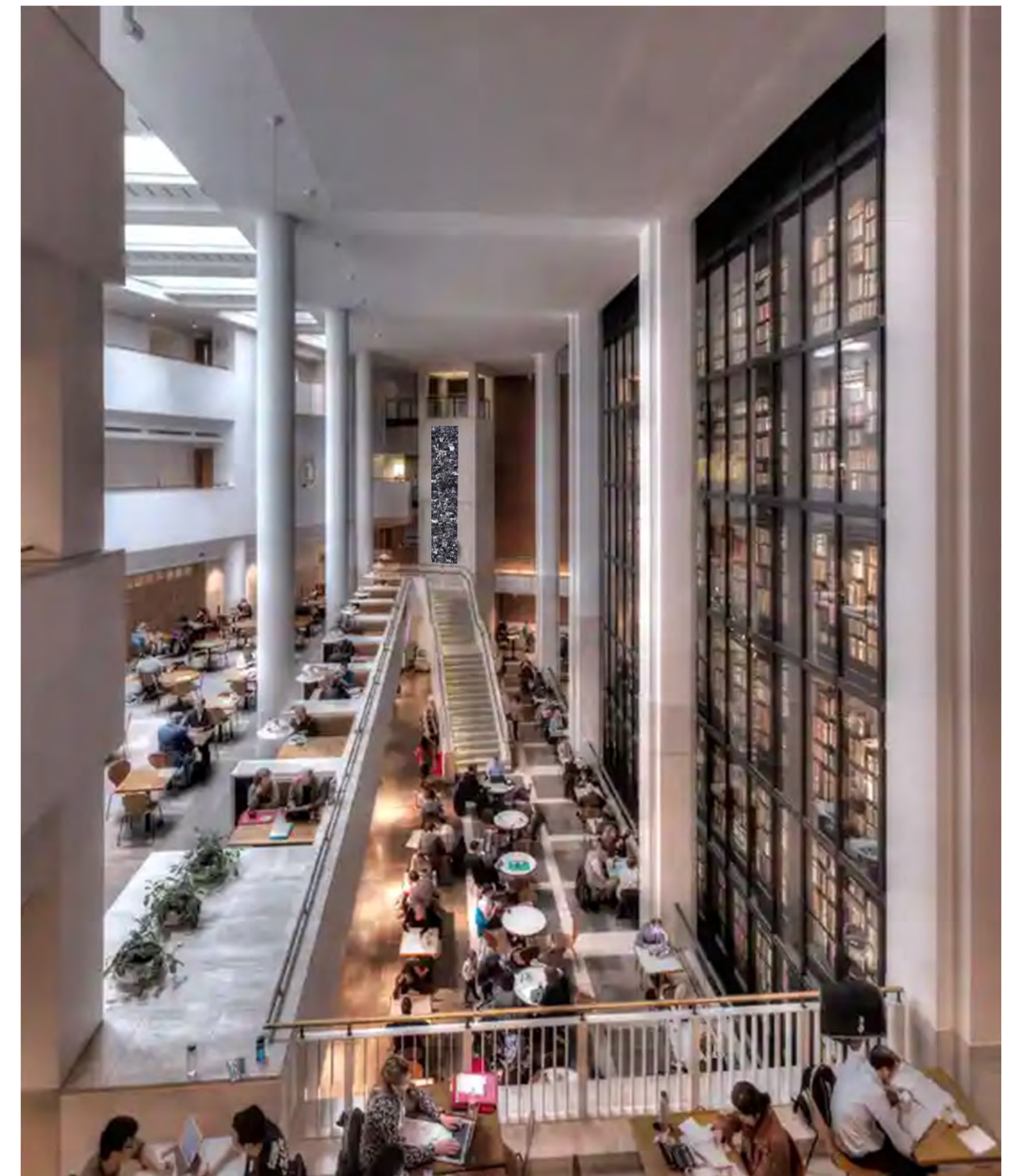
INSTALL ONE
LCC Media
Show



INSTALL TWO

The British Library

Exhibiting in various national public libraries of the countries included in the collections



INSTALL TWO
The New York Public
Library



INSTALL TWO

The Royal Library of the Netherlands

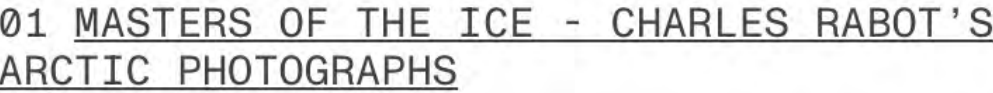


OUR ARCHIVE

'Ours' (2024) is a multimedia tapestry and book project which explores the control over access to archives within the public domain and the power structures involved therein. The work aims to provide new perspectives on the concept of an archive. It offers context that diverges from the imperial legacy associated with the historical collation of documents, facilitating engagement with a broader audience and contemporary realities.

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Email
Instagram

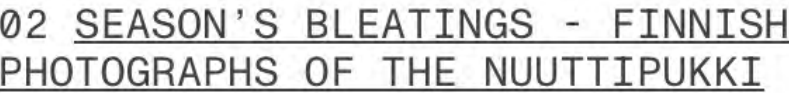


Not much can be found surrounding the archive of Charles Rabot's Masters of the Ice collection, with the primary source I found to be the public domain site themselves and then a sole Wikipedia entry on the man himself.

Rabot was a French geographer, glaciologist, traveller, journalist, lecturer, translator, and explorer, a man of many talents; the Masters of the Ice collection was a series of images that were taken on Rabot's trip to Norway in ca. 1881, a collection of black and white photographs documenting his travels.

Read more

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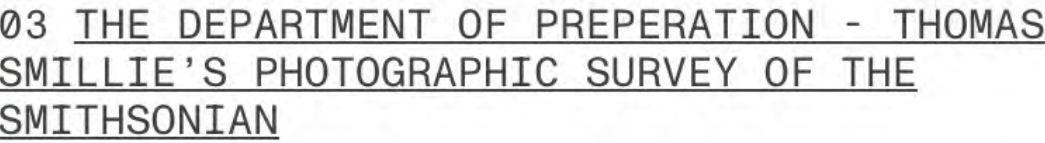


The Finnish celebration of St. Knuts Day differs slightly from the Swedish and Norwegian versions: they both celebrate the end of the Christmas or holiday season, Finnish traditions focus less on the Christmas tree and more on the 'Nuuttipukki', a common Finnish character dressed as a goat that visits houses for leftover food and alcoholic drinks.

In the old days, if a household rejected the 'Nuuttipukki's' demands, he would begin to cause chaos and perform evil deeds within your home, often scaring your animals, destroying your garden, and even harassing your children and servants.

Read more

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Thomas William Smillie was designated 'custodian' of the Smithsonian Institution's photographic 'specimens' in 1896, a position we might now call curator of photography. He served as the Smithsonian's first

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